



OYASAF

OMOOBA YEMISI ADEDOYIN SHYLLON ART FOUNDATION



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Talking Drum... Africa's rhythmic export

Although it's of West African origin, the Talking Drum - as OYASAF's research shows - has found its way into other parts of the continent and overseas, exporting the magic of using a single musical instrument to communicate in pitches.



An artisan, making talking drums in, ketu, Lagos, Southwest, Nigeria

giving the drum a type of rhythm that can be used to communicate in various African languages.

The origin of talking drum can be traced to the ancient old Oyo Empire, from where its popularity spread to other West African cities prior to the Transatlantic slave trade. And with the slave trade, the drum was sub-consciously exported to Central, South America and the Caribbean as a result of the Transatlantic Trade in slaves. Quite interesting, the drum, according to sources, was banned when the slave masters found out that African slaves were using it to communicate.

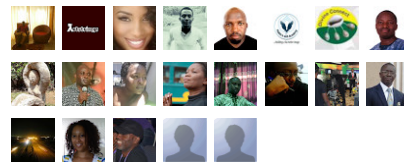
Talking drum is called by different names across West Africa, some of which include gangan, dundun (Yoruba), Kalangu, Dan darbi (Hausa), dondo (Songhai), igba (Igbo) and donno, lunna (Dagbani Gurunsi).

Talking drum is hourglass-shaped and two-faced, with a drum on each end. It is also known as 'waist-drum,' since the hourglass shape appears to give the drum a waist-like form. The drum is made from animal hide, and have leather chords, which run along its body attached to the animal hide at the other end. Talking drum varies in sizes; from the smallest called *gangan* to the largest known as *dundun*.

The talking drum is held under the left arm and squeezed as the drummer hits each surface with a bent stick. The act of squeezing the chord changes the pitch and gives various notes: the harder the drum is squeezed, the higher the note produced,

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A Yoruba talking drummer (note how he squeezes the drum's chord with his left hand).

The pitch of the drum can be regulated based on how the player strikes the surface of the drum to change its rhythm. The pitches of the drum can mirror people's voice, hence the name 'talking drums.'

Wider strength of the talking drum's pitch and rhythms is the ability to communicate with the spiritual world, according to the faith of each African tribe. For example, the talking drum produces prayers and blessings for every new day in countless villages across West Africa. It's one of the oldest instruments used by griots in West Africa, particularly in most part of Yoruba land, till date.

Posted by [oyasaf](#) at [10:16](#)



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